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CONFERENCE *connection*

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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

June 1, 2020

Tonight! Re-Opening of Churches – Part II – Conversation for all Church Leaders

Monday, June 1 at 7:00 pm Eastern / 6:00 pm Central
Join us via Zoom. [Register online here](#).

A Time for Prayer, Conversation and Support

Thursday 7 pm Eastern/ 6 pm Central

You are all invited to join others in the Conference for an opportunity to gather as we process the events of this past week. [Register online here](#).

Reflections from a Lifetime of Fighting Racism

by *Min. Carrole Moss, Generosity Coordinator*

These past few weeks have been hard, and this Pandemic has not been kind to many of us, coupled with the recent "PUBLIC LYNCHINGS". I am saddened as a Black Mother, of a Black son and two Black grandsons. My heart races when my phone rings, my heart is so torn... **MY HEART HURTS!!**

My first experience with this type of violence and hatred happened when I was eight years old. We were traveling to my sisters home, only to meet a man running with a knife in his hand. He was trying to flag us down for a ride. My dad, said NO. We



traveled for a little ways (remind you, we lived in the country) when we witnessed the yard filled with people, standing over the body of a beautiful Black woman who had been decapitated. It turns out, she had rejected the advances of a white man and was murdered. Her sister, was my classmate and she was my friend. I didn't sleep for years, afraid and alone because I could not tell what I had seen for fear that my parents would face the same peril.

My father reassured me that it would be well and always supported me as I became involved in my civil rights endeavors. I wanted a change as I never understood why we were LESS THAN.

My summer of 1963 was spent organizing our MARCH ON WASHINGTON. I was the only female involved in that quest. We could not physically attend, but we did live in a small town called Washington, Arkansas and it was appropriate to have our March on Washington. When it was over and I returned home, I was met by my Father, who informed me that the KKK had been there and threatened my entire family and community. I believed then and still believed in the beliefs Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I still believe in protesting, yet peacefully. I continue my fight and will never give up on believing that we can do this and that this is a mission and ministry that can only be accomplished by those who want change.

I moved to New York City and became a part of the Black Panther movement. That was an awesome experience we were taught how to protest and to help without violence. I have spent my life as an advocate for justice and equality. I served with some great advocates for equality and justice.

I have always been an advocate for civil and human rights. I continue to serve this great conference with dignity and pride and I encourage you ALL to do the same.

I have been told in the past weeks that I am probably suffering from PTSD. I had to give that some thought, and realized that not only am I suffering, we are ALL suffering from this condition.

We are, and have all been traumatized. I am a MOTHER TO A BLACK SON, A BLACK DAUGHTER AND TWO BLACK GRANDSONS AND ONE BLACK GRANDDAUGHTER. I shudder when my phone rings, I know the sound of their voices, i know when they are afraid. This is not normal.

Acts 2: 1-5 teaches:

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord, one place and suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared

to them divided tongues, as f fire and one sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance.

I ask: Why are we struggling for answers? We are taught non-violence, yet our systems are uprooted in violence. We must acknowledge that right thing does not ensure right outcomes. Power never concedes power without a struggle. Sometimes that struggle becomes violent and violated. The Blood of Jesus will NEVER lose its power. We must realize that RACISM is the enemy. We must realize that we cannot continually have our eyes/mindset on the mountain..we simply cannot focus on the mountain, when the real work occurs in the valley. God has called us to do the valley ministry, to close the doors to the buildings and come down off the mountains and do real ministry...IN THE VALLEY. God is in the midst of this PANDEMIC. It is a time of change. Breathe on us, Please give us ears to hear, and hearts to receive what the Lord is trying to tell us. Breathe on us, reshape our minds. Spirit of the Living GOD, fall fresh on us. Spirit of the Living God, COME NOW AND BLESS US! We know that God can save us!

Reflecting on the past is often painful...Be encouraged and keep the faith. Its OK not to be OK. Remember: Its good to protest, Please do it peacefully so that there will be no more violence.

We are all in this together...This is not a sprint...this is a LONG run. "Mindset work" is not enough when your mind has been fed toxicity for decades. You have to challenge the racial programming FIRST, DURING AND ALWAYS TO MAKE PROGRESS. We need help because internalized toxicity often needs externalized support. Please VOTE! We can make a change.

Peace and Blessings,
Carrole

News from the Conference Office

What's Next?

by Char Burch, Transitional Conference Minister

Following the Death of George Floyd and others – what is next? Although we in the Southeast Conference live in different communities each with a different context, we all need to ask that question. I witnessed some powerful preaching online yesterday (May 31)! I am reading Facebook posts as churches and individuals process what they might do to change our

current realities. I am also beginning to receive suggestions of books that help white people understand the realities of racism.

If you have resources to you suggest, please send them to me and we will begin to post references to some of them on our website. If you have suggestions how we as a Conference can respond that will lead to change and encourage others to change, please let me know. I do not have the answers, but I invite your thoughts. You can email me at cburch@secucc.org.

In addition, if you want to read some of the written responses that the UCC National Officers and Conferences have made this past week, please go to our Conference website (secucc.org).

For All Clergy

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**

Tuesdays in June (2, 9, 16, 23, 30) - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central)

This week will provide an opportunity to reflect on the past week: acts of racism and acts of violence. How do we process the emotions, how do we assist people in our congregations, what should we as the SEC Conference be doing?

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/479440102>

- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**

Thursday, June 23: 1:00 p.m. Eastern (12:00 Central)

20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at HeartSongJean@gmail.com.)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/96976838422>

- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**

Tuesday, June 25: 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)

Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/354744689>

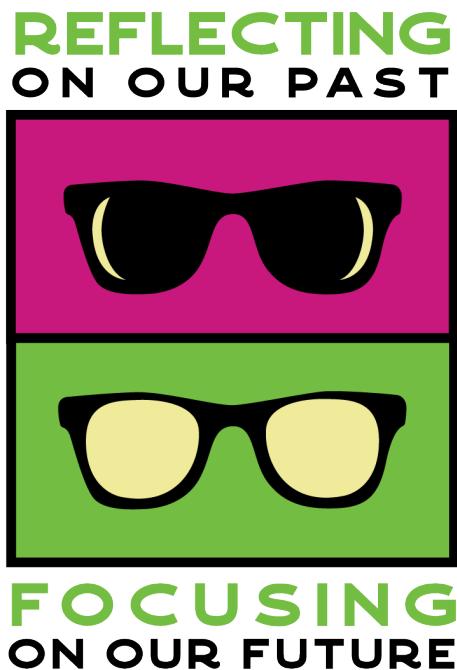
Special Event: Conference Unity Worship

Save the Dates for a special Conference-wide worship event on **Saturday, June 20, 2020** at 11:00 am Eastern / 10:00 am Central.

The Southeast Conference's Annual Meeting has been postponed, but we will still gather online for a **Conference Unity Worship Event: Being the Church in a Pandemic World**. There will be opportunities to hear from one another both through word and song as we share how we are *being* the Church in our communities during these difficult times.

[Click here for the invitation](#) to the event from Revs. JR Finney and Char Burch. You can RSVP to the worship service as well as [find more information here!](#)

Southeast Conference 2020 Annual Meeting



Our June Annual Meeting has been rescheduled for **Saturday, September 26th** from 10:30 am Eastern /9:30 am Central. It will be a shorter meeting this year. although we hope to can gather in person. We will not be gathering in one location, but will have multiple locations throughout the conference, all connected through Zoom. If it is not safe to meet in person, we will still meet on September 26 by Zoom and phone only. We hope you can join us!



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2020. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of June 7

- Virginia Highland Church; Atlanta, Georgia
- Members in Discernment and Persons in Exploration
- Adrian Boone
- Ray Speller

Week of June 14

- Union UCC; Tougaloo, Mississippi
- Vaughn Crowe Tipton
- John Gill
- Jean Norton
- Katie Kilpatrick

Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Open Table, Mobile AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA

COVID-19 Special Section

Re-Opening of Churches – Part II - Conversation for all Church Leaders

On May 18, there was an initial conversation via Zoom about churches re-opening: when it might happen and what it might look like. As things keep changing, we want to continue the conversation, developing safe and best practices. There is also the question about what churches might maintain into the future. We invite all Moderators, Church Leaders, and Clergy to be part of the conversation.

Join us on **Monday, June 1 at 7:00 pm Eastern / 6:00 pm Central** via Zoom. [Register online here](#).

Meanwhile, [click here](#) for a letter by Transitional Conference Minister, Rev. Char Burch, with summary insights from our Mat 18th conversation. Other resources, including a suggested Phase-in plan can be located on the Conference website, under COVID-19 resources.

Pandemic grants for churches added to UCC National Setting COVID-19 relief response

The United Church of Christ National Setting is offering financial assistance to local churches whose ministries have been challenged by the novel coronavirus pandemic. As one, the national officers have collectively identified \$2.6 million in COVID-19 relief, \$1.5 million in loans that will be [administered through the Cornerstone Fund](#) and another \$1.1 million in micro-grants. **The grant application process opens June 1.** Grant money will be available through the [process detailed on the UCC website](#).

We want to highlight one type of grant provided through UCC Disaster Ministries and is disbursed through the Southeast Conference. It is called UCC COVID-19 Conference Recovery Grant. This is specifically designed to meet the needs created or worsened due to COVID-19 in communities hardest hit by the pandemic. The grants aid churches in their efforts to provide assistance to individuals and families (not churches themselves). The Conference actually needs to apply for the funds from Disaster Ministries. So please let me know if your church could benefit by such a grant so that the Conference can make an application.



"I know the plans I have in mind for you, declares [God]; they are plans for peace, not disaster, to give you a future filled with hope."

- Jeremiah 29:11 (CEB)

United Church of Christ Cornerstone Fund Pandemic Relief Loan

12-Month, Interest-Only. Other restrictions apply.

UCC Cornerstone Fund Pandemic Relief Loan

The United Church of Christ Cornerstone Fund Pandemic Relief Loan program is available to churches in participating Conferences, including the Southeast Conference. While loan amounts and terms can vary by Conference, the Southeast Conference program is offering a limited number of 12-month, interest-only loans of up to \$5,000 at a rate of 2.50%. Loan applications are required and are due by July 15, 2020. Visit cornerstonefund.org/sec to download the loan application.

Are Churches Liable if People Get Sick?

This is one of the questions being asked as churches consider re-opening for in-person worship. The UCC Insurance Board has created a webpage that may help answer those questions, along with many other topics related to the pandemic: insuranceboard.org/covid-19-resources/

Social Distancing, Not Social Isolation

Join the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center for a timely Webinar: How can church leaders respond to the challenges of the current pandemic and the resultant “radical aloneness” that afflicts many of us? This webinar will integrate Bowen family systems theory with the research of John Cacioppo,

social neuroscientist. Join them online for ***Social Distancing, Not Social Isolation*** and learn how church leaders can reach out to people in a spirit of compassion and help them overcome potential loneliness. Sessions are scheduled for Thursday, June 11 at 2:00 pm Central Time and also on Tuesday, June 16 at 10:00 am Central Time. The fee is \$30, payable at the time of registration, which is being handled online by [Brown Paper Tickets](#).

News from the Wider Church

Energy Democracy Zoom Meeting is June 23

COVID has highlighted a huge disparity of environmental and economic justice in the South. Congregations are suffering because of the inability to gather for worship service however utilities are still requiring pay for their service. Those in our congregations are not able to provide goods and services for their living yet utilities are requiring payment for their service for you to live. This is inequitable and egregious. We are limited in our choices for energy sources; pay disproportionate energy rates; and, are dying from the pollution. We as people of faith are called to fight for a just society. We want to invite you to envision a ministry where we had more resources for ministry because our congregation has control of their own energy. We invite you to demand that our leadership places people and planet over profit. We invite you to fight for the least of these. Mark your calendar now for June 23 at 7 pm EA/6 pm and plan to join Rev. Michael Malcom. [Click here to register](#).

Denominational Book Study for Pastoral Relations Committees and Zoom Gathering for Clergy Offered by MESA

Recently the Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization office of the UCC (MESA) offered two Zoom sessions on Pastoral Relations Committees. The response from Committees on Ministry and Pastoral Relations Committees (PRC) was significant. One takeaway from those presentations was that there was a need for ministers to participate, share their experiences and have input into what a healthy PRC would like.

Join in a denominational-wide conversation around the book, [Saying No to Say Yes](#) (David C. Olson and Nancy G. Devor, authors, available online and from local sellers). After reading the book, Ministers (limited to 25 at each

session) are invited to join Revs. Tara Barber and Stephen Boyd for a discussion: Either July 22 at 7 p.m. ET or July 29 at 4:30 p.m. ET. [Click here to register.](#)

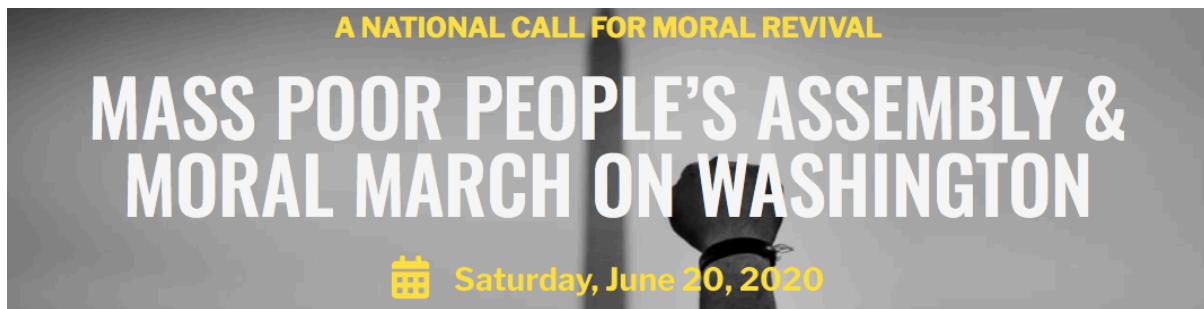
Following those conversations, MESA plans a latter opportunity to reconvene with interested parties to discuss boundaries, parameters, and expectations for healthy Pastoral Relations Committees in their ministerial settings.



The UCC Strengthen the Church Offering

We are amid a crisis that is demanding that we remain physically distant at a time when so many need the love and hope of a strong church to walk with them through an extraordinary global emergency. As many of us now present our ministry online, we pray that our love is being felt across technology, reaching those who need us most. Being church in new ways has demanded much of us as we have faced this challenging time together.

This special offering supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. The world of the church is changing as we seek to reach out in different ways. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill on its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities. Pentecost Sunday, May 31, is the recommended day for the offering.



Join the Poor People's Campaign Digital Mobilization

In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. launched a Poor People's Campaign believing that people joining together could create, "a new and unsettling force in our complacent nation." Over the last two years, UCC members and congregations have been participating in the continuation of this work through the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival by national and state direct actions, education and organizing. The campaign has united tens of thousands of people across the country to challenge the evils of systemic racism, poverty, the war economy and ecological devastation while centering the voices and experiences of poor, low-wealth, and vulnerable communities. [Click here to learn more and to register.](#)

News from our Local Congregations

What is YOUR Congregation Doing?

Even though we are not meeting in-person for worship at our churches, local church ministry doesn't stop during a pandemic. In fact, there is most likely the need for *more* connection with others. Let us know what you are doing in your local setting by [sending us an email](#). Share a short paragraph or two and a photo or two. We'd love to share with the rest of the Conference.

Training and Learning Opportunities

2021 UCC Southern Region Women's Retreat

Mark your calendars for October 15-17, 2021 for the 2021 UCC Southern Region Women's Retreat, hosted by the Florida UCC Women at Cerveny

Conference Center, 11057 Camp Weed Place, Live Oak, FL 32060. Stay tuned for more information.

Conference Calendar

“Opening Back Up” Online Conversation, Part II

Monday, June 1 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT ([Register online here](#))

Clergy Conversations via Zoom

Tuesday, June 2 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT (<https://zoom.us/j/479440102>)

A Time for Prayer, Conversation and Support

Thursday, June 4 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT ([Register online here](#))

Clergy Conversations via Zoom

Tuesday, June 9 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT (<https://zoom.us/j/479440102>)

Board of Directors Meeting

June 11 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT

Clergy Conversations via Zoom

Tuesday, June 16 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT (<https://zoom.us/j/479440102>)

Conference Unity Worship

June 20 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT ([Register online here](#))

Live Harp Meditations for Ministers

Thursday, June 23 at 1:00 pm EDT (<https://zoom.us/j/96976838422>)

Clergy Conversations via Zoom

Tuesday, June 23 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT (<https://zoom.us/j/479440102>)

Zoom Conversation for Specialized Ministers

Tuesday, June 25 @ 9:30 am - 11:00 am EDT (<https://zoom.us/j/354744689>)

View the **full calendar** of events online: <https://www.seucc.org/events/>

Contact Us

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